Hatchery Highlights

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Iron River NFH
News and Updates

Spring 2006

Topics this month: *Fishing Expos *School Tour *Coaster Brook Trout Plant *Fish Truck on Parade *Elastomer Tag Update *Oxytet Marking

IRON RIVER NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY EXPANDS ITS EXPOSURE AT A NEW EVENT


Iron River NFH informational booth

On April 28, 2006 the Iron River NFH headed to Poplar, Wisconsin to staff a booth at the First Annual Fisherman's Expo. The hatchery had not been exposed to this segment of the public much before and the Expo was a great opportunity to spotlight our programs. The Expo was hosted by the Mission Covenant Church and sponsored by local community businesses, numerous angling clubs and organizations, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Douglas County Fish and Game League. Mounted fish displays donned the walls, a live trout fishing pond and minnow races occupied the kids and charter fishing trip opportunities peaked many interests. Nearly 1,000 people attended the event, and numerous new contacts were made. Each vendor provided door prizes to the Expo attendees. The Iron River NFH gave away a day of fish spawning and lunch, to two eager new supporters. They will have their choice of handling and spawning lake trout or brook trout brood-stock and participate in all aspects of a day at the hatchery. Interestingly enough, this event was discovered somewhat by accident. Steve Redman, Lead Fishery Biologist, was fishing at a local lake when he was approached by a couple of anglers who mentioned the Expo. During subsequent conversations, they disclosed that they were looking for participants. Luckily, Steve was at the right place at the right time (at least for outreach, not necessarily catching fish)! It just goes to show that station outreach can be a 24/7 endeavor!!!

THE GRAND TOUR

The bright yellow school bus pulled up to the Iron River National Fish Hatchery on March 21, 2006. Twenty students from the Ashland High School, accompanied by their teacher, arrived to take a tour of the hatchery. They were quite impressed by the number of fish on station (1.2 million yearlings, approximately 1.6 million fry and several thousand brood fish) and wondered what we do with all the fish. Fishery Biologist Angela Baran guided the class and explained where the hatchery gets its water supply (Schacte Creek), what happens to the fish (spawning brood in the fall and stocking yearlings in the spring), and why the hatchery only raises lake trout and coaster brook trout, (restoring naturally reproducing populations in the Great Lakes). The students were able to get a close up look at the "big" distribution trucks and peek inside the smaller tanks used for hauling fry. Many questions were asked about how to get a job with the Fish and Wildlife Service and what types of classes to take in college so hopefully we will have some new recruits someday!!

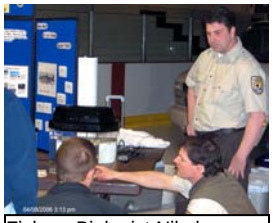
IRON RIVER NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY SHOWS IT'S WARES IN LOCAL PARADES


The Iron River fish truck in the Blueberry Festival Parade

In an attempt to expand our exposure and to show off our fish hauling truck, Iron River National Fish Hatchery Fish Biologists recently participated in two parades. One was held on the Fourth of July in Superior, Wisconsin, and the other was held July 22, 2006, during the Blueberry Festival in Iron River, Wisconsin. This marks the 2nd year the hatchery has participated in the Iron River parade. Many locals don't even know there is a National Fish Hatchery in the area. Having our truck out in the community shows we are really here and allows us a chance to "toot our horn" literally. Fishery Biologists Steve Redman and Kurt Schilling handled the truck driving responsibilities while volunteers handed out candy and fish shaped crackers. As a bonus, it was a great way to advertise our open house scheduled for August 5, 2006. We hope to continue to participate in these events, and hopefully more events in the future.


Kurt Schilling displays a Parade Participation Award

SHOW US YOUR FISH


Fishery Biologist Nikolas Grueneis points out live fish on display.

On April 9th, 2006, Iron River NFH attended the Trout Unlimited Fishing Expo in Ashland, WI for the fourth year in a row. The Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited held their annual event to raise awareness about local and national fisheries and environmental issues. The auction raises funds to support projects such as stream habitat restoration and environmental education programs. The Iron River NFH is an annual participant along with other state, federal, non profit, and private agencies and groups who provide information, entertainment, and educational materials to all attendees. The hatchery set up a booth with information about the federal hatchery system, national fisheries issues, stocking information, and employment opportunities with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The biggest draw to the booth every year is the live fish display. Two aquariums were set up with fry in one and yearlings in the other. In addition adult brood fish were anesthetized and placed out on damp towels for people to handle and see. Two hatchery personnel were on hand to answer questions and dispense information.

ELASTOMER TAG UPDATE

Iron River National Fish Hatchery elastomer tagged 2 groups (a brood lot and a production lot), of fish in March 2006. The tagged brood fish were fully inventoried on March 31, 2006 to determine tag retention after 30 days. The inventory showed that 10% of the fish lost their tags completely with no visible remnants. These fish will be inventoried again during spawning later this fall to see if there is any further loss of tags.
On May 17, 2006, a length/weight, tag check inventory was performed on 100 fish of each strain of production fish. For the Tobin Harbor strain coaster brook trout, the overall tag retention was 93%. For the Siskiwit Bay strain coaster brook trout, the overall retention was 98%. This tagging procedure seems to be successful and we will be evaluating the possible use on tagging brood fish or small production lots in the future.


The arrow is pointing to a red elastomer tag glowing under a special light.

COASTER BROOK TROUT PLANTED INTO LAKE SUPERIOR


A Grand Portage Tribal Fisheries Biologist stocks coaster brook trout.

Biologists from the Iron River National Fish Hatchery stocked Coaster Brook Trout with assistance from personnel from the Grand Portage Tribal Resources Department. Stocking began at the shores of Lake Superior and two additional streams, which are tributaries to Lake Superior located on Grand Portage Reservation lands, were planted with 2-3 inch fingerling brook trout that were reared at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery. At the Lake, 50,000 fingerlings were released. Grand Portage Creek received 35,000, and the Pigeon River 100,000. All fish released were marked with oxytetracycline at the Hatchery before release. This will allow biologists to monitor the status of the coasters in these habitats. When stocking the Pigeon River, a new challenge faced the crew, the sun was very hot that day and temperatures they did grew, so new waters were discovered that provided for the tiny few.
This multiple year event which is coordinated between the Grand Portage Indian Community and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was established to fulfill the rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior brook trout. The combined efforts have led to continued monitoring of coaster brook trout status, distribution, movement, and abundance of re-introduced fish.

OXYTETRACYCLINE USED TO MARK COASTER BROOK TROUT FRY

The Iron River National Fish Hatchery has completed marking all of the production Coaster Brook Trout fry for 2006. Oxytetracycline marking is the preferred fish marking technique on fish too small, (less than one inch in length), to accurately fin clip or externally mark. The fish were exposed to a 700 parts per million solution of Oxytetracycline for an 8 hour period in a recirculation bath treatment. The absorption of the oxytetracycline by the fish will make a permanent mark on their bones. As the fish grows and adds new bone, there will always be a yellow spot or ring from the chemical marking process. If a biologist catches the marked fish they can extract the otolith (inner ear bone). When the otolith is exposed to ultraviolet light the Oxytetracycline mark will glow yellow. The presence of this mark distinguishes wild fish from hatchery fish. The marked fish are stocked into specifically selected tributaries on Lake Superior. The purpose of these stockings is to help fisheries biologists determine the best way to initiate restoration of naturally reproducing populations of Coaster Brook Trout in its native waters.

CONSERVING AMERICA'S Fisheries

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